

THE USBORNE  
BOOK OF  
**FAMOUS  
PAINTINGS**



# St. George and the Dragon

by Raphael Sanzio (then known just as Raphael)  
Italy, about 1505-06, oil paint on wood, 29 x 25cm (11 x 10in)

This dramatic, 16th-century painting illustrates a famous story about St. George, who fought a dragon to rescue a princess. At the time, the story was very popular with artists and their clients. This version was probably created for an Italian nobleman.

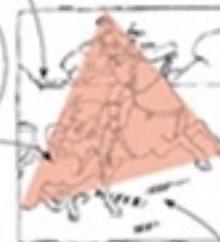
## Telling stories

The wispy blue hills in the background help to create a feeling of distance.

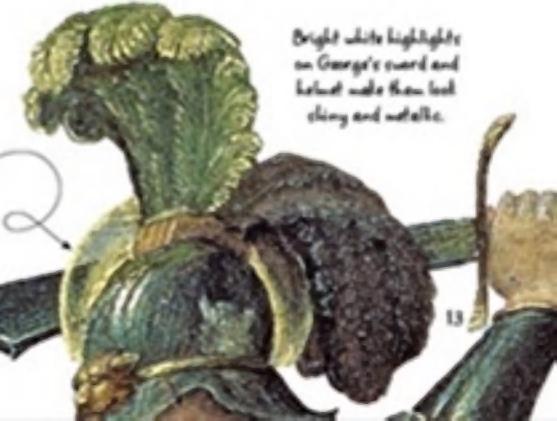
This diagram shows how the central figures pile up into a pyramid.

Look for the wonderful mix of animal details in the dragon, with its spiky wings, webbed feet and coiled, snake-like tail.

There is a golden halo around George's helmet, to show he is a saint.



George has already attacked the dragon with a lance.



Bright white highlights on George's sword and helmet make them look shiny and metallic.

# Mona Lisa

by Leonardo da Vinci (also known known just as Leonardo)  
Italy, about 1503-16, oil paint on wood, 77 x 50cm (30 x 20in)

The woman in this portrait has one of the most famous faces in the world, and her picture has inspired generations of artists and writers.

But no one knows for sure who she was. The most likely candidate is Lisa Giocondo, the wife of a wealthy Italian merchant.

## Mystery smile

Lisa's strange half-smile is what fascinates people. Is she happy, sad or simply bored? Her expression is impossible to pin down, and seems to change depending on the angle you look at it. Leonardo used a technique known as *sfumato* to create this effect, deliberately blurring the corners of her mouth and eyes.



This close-up shows the soft, blurred shadows at the corners of her mouth. It also reveals how the surface of the paint has cracked over time.



## Stolen art

Leonardo spent years perfecting the picture – x-rays reveal three earlier versions below the surface. He eventually gave it to the King of France, who hung it in his bathroom. Later, it was given to a Paris museum. In 1911, the picture hit headlines when it was stolen by a workman who wanted to take it back to Italy. After two years, it was discovered inside a false-bottomed trunk and returned to Paris, where it is seen by millions each year.



# A Bar at the Folies-Bergère

by Edouard Manet

France, 1882, oil paint on canvas, 96 x 130cm (38 x 51in)

Notice the green boots here. They belong to an acrobat on a trapeze, high above the crowd.

The artist signed his name on the label of this bottle.



This painting offers a glittering glimpse of a busy bar in 19th-century Paris. The scene is cleverly arranged so most of it is seen in the mirror behind the bar. It's as if you are standing right there, facing the wistful-looking barmaid.

A vase of roses adds a touch of softness amid all the marble and glass.

Look out for the mirror's golden frame. Notice how the mirror glass is tinted with blue, too.

The figures in the background were dashed in with rapid, blurry strokes, suggesting a jostling crowd.

## Nights out

The Folies-Bergère was a popular evening spot where people could go to drink and watch entertainers, including musicians, dancers and circus acts. The artist, Edouard Manet, made sketches in the Folies, but worked on the painting in his studio, hiring a real Folies barmaid, named Suzon, to pose for him.



## Puzzling picture

There is something odd about the mirror. If you look closely, Suzon and some of the bottles don't match their reflections. X-rays show Manet altered the reflection, probably to avoid cluttering the background. The man in the top hat is another puzzle. The reflection shows him standing just in front of Suzon

— where you, the viewer, ought to be. It's as if you've been turned into a 19th-century gentleman and included in the scene.

